

Iran Update



Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Katherine Wells, Annika Ganzeveld, Siddhant Kishore, Alexandra Braverman, Ria Reddy, and Nicholas Carl

August 1, 2024, Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Iran and the Axis of Resistance are messaging that they will conduct a coordinated, large-scale attack on Israel in retaliation for Israel killing several Axis of Resistance leaders, including Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, in recent days. Senior Iranian security officials, including Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri and Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian, suggested that both Iran and the Axis of Resistance will retaliate against Israel.[1] Iranian leaders met with senior Axis of Resistance officials, many of whom were already in Tehran for the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, to coordinate their combined attack.[2] Iranian state media has furthermore suggested that the upcoming Iranian-led attack on Israel would be similar to but greater than the drone and missile attack that Iran launched on Israel in April 2024.[3]

Iran and the Axis of Resistance are almost certainly considering how to cause greater damage to Israel than the April 2024 attack did since that attack failed to impose a serious cost on Israel and thus failed to deter. Iran and its allies fired around 170 one-way attack drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles at Israel in the April 2024 attack.[4] Iran designed this strike package of over 300 projectiles to inflict serious damage on Israel. Iran specifically targeted two remote Israeli targets—an airbase in the southern Israeli desert and an intelligence center in the Golan Heights.[5] Lebanese Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets, while the Houthis launched a few drones and missiles in the April 2024 attack.[6] Iran modeled its attack on Russian strike packages used in Ukraine.[7] Iran has observed how Russian forces have combined drones and missiles in attacks on Ukrainian targets and likely concluded that it could similarly use such a strike package to overwhelm Israeli air defenses and get some projectiles to strike their targets as CTP-ISW has previously assessed.[8]

But the United States, Israel, and their allies intercepted the vast majority of the projectiles so that the Iranian attack did significantly less damage than Tehran intended.[9] The United States and Israel benefitted from the fact that the Iranian attack drones took hours to fly from Iran to Israel across nearly a thousand kilometers. That hours-long period gave the United States, Israel, and their allies time to prepare their defenses and intercept all the drones as well as many of the subsequent ballistic and cruise missiles. Iranian leaders likely calculate that they failed to deter Israel with their April 2024 attack because they did not inflict serious damage.

Iran is likely now planning for its next attack in order to establish deterrence with Israel while still avoiding a large-scale war. One of the most dangerous but increasingly likely scenarios is that Iran and the Axis of Resistance launch a combined, large-scale drone and missile attack that incorporates lessons from the April 2024 attack. Iranian leaders, in this scenario, could increase the volume of projectiles fired at Israel by launching more from Iran, from the surrounding countries, or both. Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria could launch simultaneous attacks to further strain Israeli air defenses as well. Drones and missiles launched from Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria would be much harder to intercept than the ones from Iran given the shorter distances and flight times to Israel. US and Israeli forces would have significantly less time to intercept those projectiles. It would take Hezbollah drones around 15 minutes to reach Haifa and around 40 minutes flying on direct paths to reach Tel Aviv, for instance (although many drones will likely fly indirect and longer routes).[10] Iran could alternatively exploit the short flight times to concentrate a smaller volume of fire against a single target in Israel rather than against two. Shorter flight times for the drones could make it easier to coordinate them with ballistic missiles fired from Iran, whose flight times are generally less than 10 minutes. If Iran and its partners and proxies can concentrate drones and missiles on Israeli targets simultaneously, they may have reason to expect that the distractions caused by the one can facilitate penetration by the other.

Iran and the Axis of Resistance will also benefit from the fact that they have probed Israeli air defenses extensively since April 2024 and thus learned how to attack them more effectively. Hezbollah and the Houthis have both conducted attacks that have successfully bypassed Israeli air defenses since April 2024. The most notable example was the Houthi drone attack on Tel Aviv on July 19 that killed an Israeli and injured four others.[11] Israeli air defenses have similarly struggled to

intercept Hezbollah drones in recent months because of the short flight time and mountainous terrain.[12] **The success that Israel and its allies and partners had in defeating the April 2024 strike should not be cause for complacency in the face of a new attack. But Israel and its supporters have multiple systems to engage various kinds of targets and are aware of the capabilities Hezbollah’s drones have shown, so neither is there cause for pessimism.**

Iran could inadvertently trigger an expanded conflict with Israel and even the United States if Iran launches an attack along the lines described here. Launching hundreds of projectiles is inherently risky, particularly given the failure rate that Iranian missiles have shown.[13] Technical errors could cause severe collateral damage, as demonstrated by the recent Hezbollah attack that killed 12 Israeli children in the Golan Heights.[14] This risk is higher given reports that Iran is planning to target locations near Haifa and Tel Aviv.[15] Both cities are far more populated than the two remote locations that Iran targeted in April 2024. The risk of civilian casualties is thus very high even if Iran does not mean to strike civilian targets around Haifa and Tel Aviv. Iran could trigger an expanded war if it kills Israeli civilians or inflicts severe damage—regardless of whether Iran intends to avoid an overt war. It may not be immediately obvious to Israeli leaders that a large strike aimed at one or two targets is not, in fact, aimed at a much wider target set, moreover. Drones have long ranges and often fly far beyond their targets before turning to hit them from the rear. The risk of miscalculation in a strike such as the one described is very high.

Some Iranian officials and state media have called for targeting Israeli political and military leaders in response to Haniyeh’s death. Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation President Amir Hossein Ghazi Zadeh Hashemi called on August 1 for killing one of Israel’s “main” leaders.[16] IRGC-affiliated media similarly argued on August 1 that “every [Israeli] political and military official will be a potential target.”[17]

Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah warned on August 1 of an “inevitable” retaliation against Israel in response to Israel killing senior Hezbollah official Fuad Shukr.[18] Nasrallah made this remark in a televised speech at a funeral for Shukr.[19] The IDF conducted an airstrike killing Shukr, who was considered Nasrallah’s “right-hand man,” in Beirut on July 30.[20] The IDF killed Shukr in response to Hezbollah conducting a rocket attack into the Golan Heights killing 12 Israeli children.[21]

Nasrallah said that Israel did not realize “which lines [it] has crossed” in killing Shukr and announced a new phase of Hezbollah operations on “all support fronts.”[22] Nasrallah suggested that this new phase would include continued attacks into northern Israel.[23] Hezbollah had conducted regular attacks into northern Israel beginning in October 2023 but largely paused these attacks after killing the 12 Israeli children on July 13. Nasrallah said in his speech that these attacks would resume the morning of August 2.[24] Nasrallah also explained that this new phase of escalation will involve an unspecified retaliation for the killing of Shukr.[25] Nasrallah claimed that the Israeli airstrike that killed Shukr also killed five Lebanese civilians.[26] This framing is especially noteworthy given that Nasrallah threatened on July 17 to attack civilian targets deep in Israel if Israeli airstrikes kill Lebanese civilians.

The Israeli airstrike targeting Fuad Shukr in Beirut on July 30 also killed an Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force officer, Milad Beydi.[27] IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami released a statement mourning the killing of Beydi and blaming Israel for his death.[28] Salami described Beydi as one of the Iranian military advisers in Lebanon and Syria.

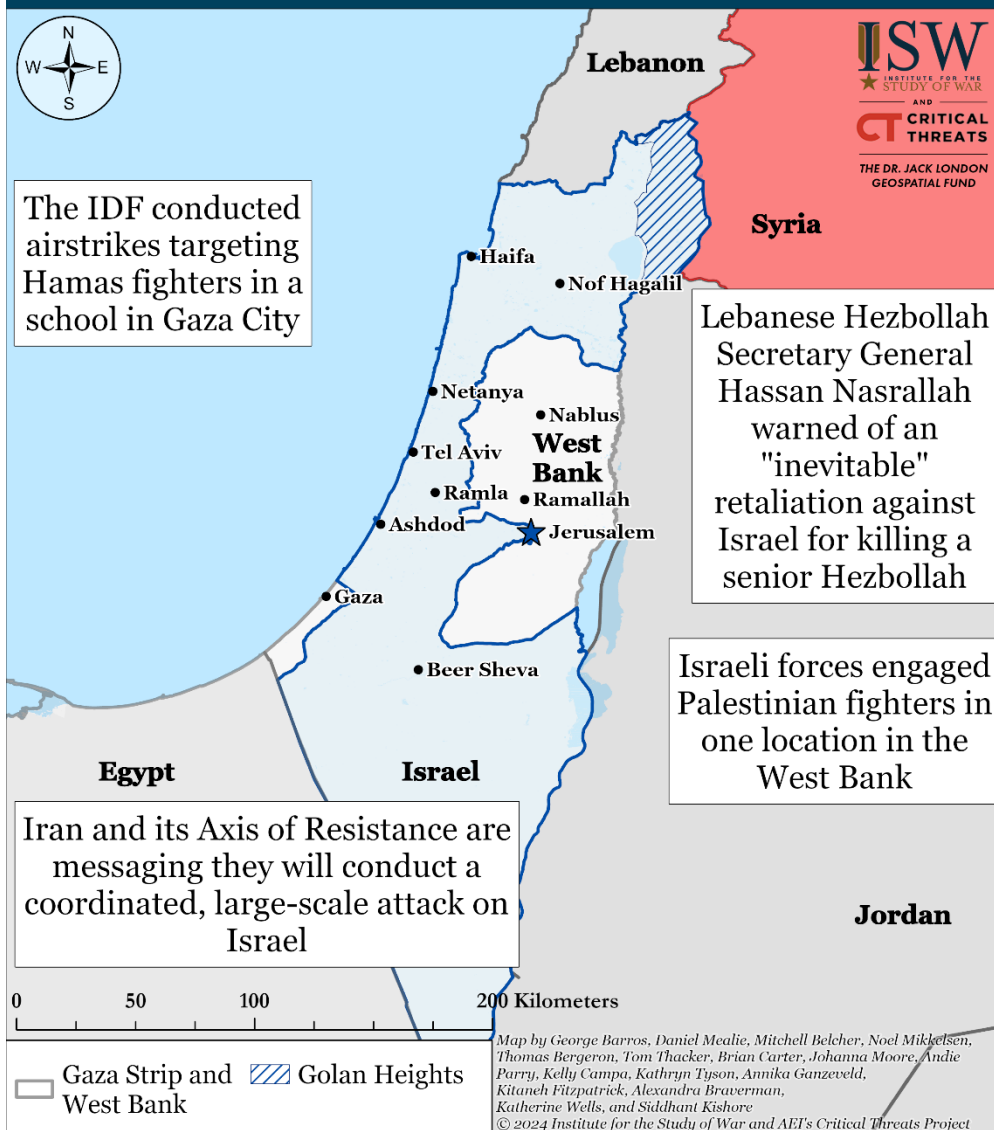
The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that it killed Hamas' top military commander, Mohammad Deif, in an airstrike in the al Mawasi humanitarian zone on July 13.[29] The IDF confirmed that the airstrike killed Deif in a statement on August 1.[30] An Israeli military correspondent reported that the IDF received definitive intelligence that confirmed Deif's death in the hours prior to the announcement.[31] The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas' military wing—has not released a statement acknowledging the IDF statement as of this writing.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran:** Iran and the Axis of Resistance are messaging that they will conduct a coordinated, large-scale attack on Israel in retaliation for Israel killing several Axis of Resistance leaders, including Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, in recent days.
- Iran is likely now planning for its next attack to establish deterrence with Israel while still avoiding a large-scale war. One of the most dangerous but increasingly likely scenarios is that Iran and the Axis of Resistance launch a combined, large-scale drone and missile attack.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah warned of an "inevitable" retaliation against Israel in response to Israel killing senior Hezbollah official Fuad Shukr.
- **Gaza Strip:** The IDF confirmed that it killed Hamas' top military commander, Mohammad Deif, in an airstrike in the al Mawasi humanitarian zone.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of August 1, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

The IDF Air Force and Shin Bet released a statement that it killed Ismail al Ghouh and that he was a member of the Hamas Nukhba forces on July 31.[32] The IDF said that al Ghouh participated in the October 7 attacks and that he played a significant role in documenting and distributing videos of attacks against Israeli forces.[33] The IDF said that attack videos are an

“inseparable” part of Hamas’ activity. The Nukhba forces is Hamas’ special operations unit responsible for ground operations into Israel. Palestinian media reported on July 31 that al Ghoul was an al Jazeera journalist, who was killed alongside his cameraman, Ramy el Rify, in al Shati refugee camp, west of Gaza City, on July 31.[34]

The IDF Air Force struck Hamas fighters in a school in Shujaiya, Gaza City, on August 1.[35] The IDF stated that Hamas used the Dalal School as a compound from which to plan attacks against Israel and to hide commanders and fighters.[36] Palestinian sources reported that 12 Palestinians were killed in the attack.[37] The IDF re-entered Shujaiya for a second time in June 2024 to degrade a reconstituted Hamas battalion and to demolish underground militia infrastructure.[38] An Israel Army Radio correspondent reported that the IDF 98th Division surrounded the Dalal School during that re-clearing operation.[39] Palestinian fighters reportedly fled the school after observing Israeli forces approach.[40] The recent IDF airstrike on Dalal School three weeks after the IDF withdrew from Shujaiya suggests that Hamas continues to exploit the IDF raid-based model to preserve Hamas forces and enable follow-on reconstitution efforts, even after the IDF re-cleared the area for a second time.[41]

Palestinian fighters continued to attack Israeli forces in Tal al Hawa, southwestern Gaza City, on August 1. Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) targeted Israeli forces with mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, and small arms.[42] PIJ also detonated a house-borne improvised explosive device (HBIED) targeting Israeli forces near Dahdouh Circle.[43] CTP-ISW has observed seven consecutive days of Palestinian fighters engaging Israeli forces in Tal al Hawa since July 26. The IDF has not commented on its deployment in the area but previously warned that all of Gaza City would become a “dangerous combat zone” on July 10, suggesting that Israeli operations may shift across sectors of Gaza City.[44]

The IDF 252nd Division continued clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor on August 1. Israeli forces destroyed militia infrastructure along the corridor.[45] The IDF 454th Fire Brigade directed an airstrike targeting several Palestinian militia cells that threatened Israeli forces in the area.[46] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades fired mortars and rockets targeting Israeli forces along the corridor.[47]

The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah on August 1.[48] The IDF Nahal Brigade operated in Tal al Sultan and destroyed a rigged building from which Hamas fighters operated.[49] Hamas and PIJ conducted combined attacks firing anti-tank guided missiles at Israeli armor and targeting Israeli forces with small arms in Shaboura refugee camp, Rafah city.[50]

The IDF Air Force struck 35 militia targets in the Gaza Strip from July 31 to August 1, including fighter cells and militia infrastructure.[51] The IDF Air Force destroyed loaded projectile launchers in Khan Younis that were aimed to fire into Israel.[52]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of August 1, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



PIJ fighters detonated an explosive-rigged building in Tal al Haw

The IDF 252nd Division continued clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor

The IDF Air Forces destroyed a rocket launcher in Khan Younis

The IDF Nahal Brigade destroyed an explosive-rigged building in Tal al Sultan

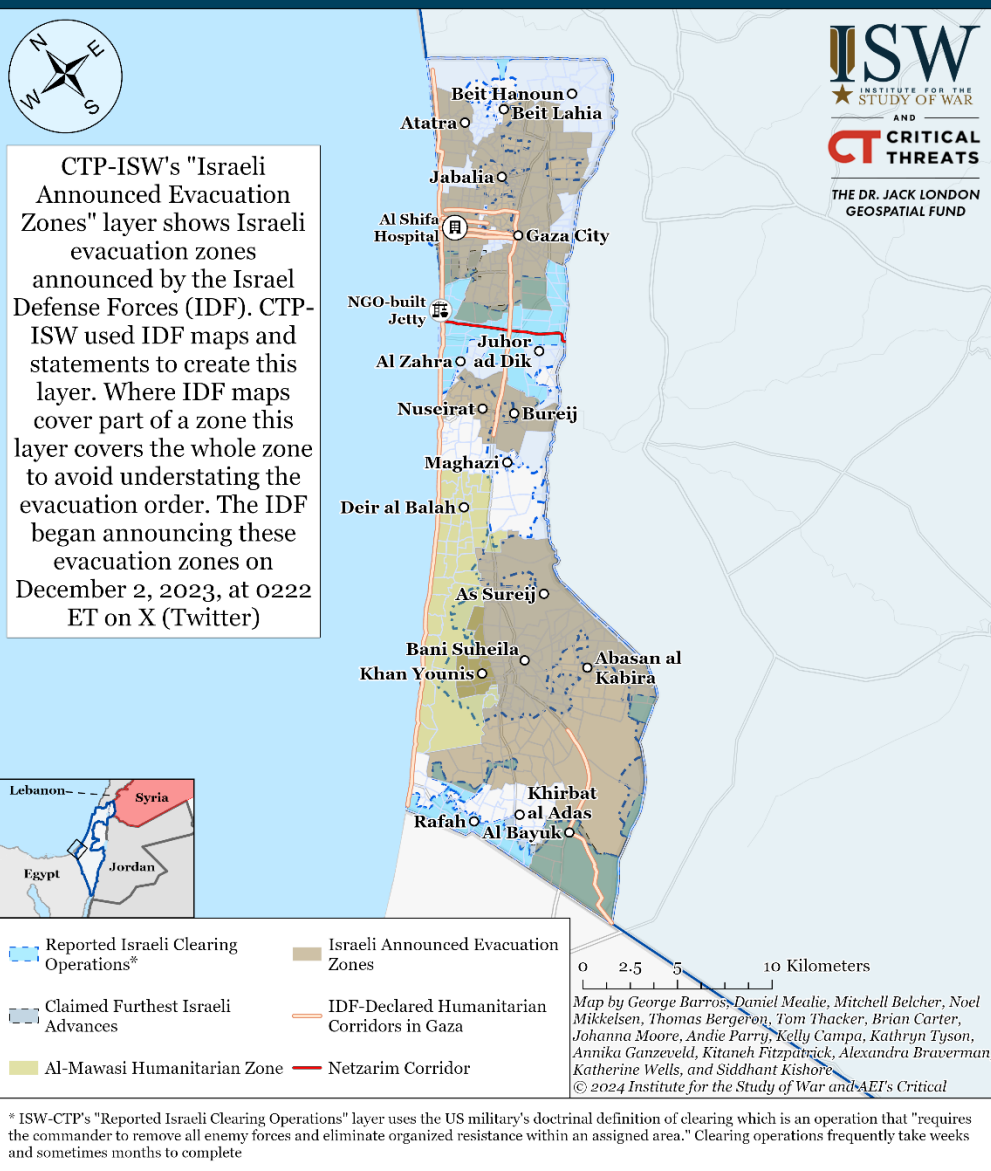
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Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, and Siddhant Kishore - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone	
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations			

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of August 1, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Unspecified sources familiar with the ceasefire and hostage negotiations told Israeli Army Radio on August 1 that Hamas froze talks “indefinitely” after Israel killed Ismail Haniyeh.[53] Hamas has not directly confirmed this report at the time of this writing. Anonymous Israeli officials said that they expect the negotiations will be suspended in at least the immediate term.[54] Israeli intelligence officials reportedly warned Israeli political leadership that the recent killings in Tehran and Beirut may freeze talks for some time “between weeks and months.”[55] White House spokesperson John Kirby said on July 31 that it is “too soon to know” how Haniyeh’s killing will influence ceasefire negotiations.[56]

Representatives from Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) met on July 31 to discuss Haniyeh’s death and reaffirm the groups’

commitments to working to achieve national Palestinian objectives.[57] Hamas and the PFLP released a joint statement calling upon Palestinians in the West Bank and east Jerusalem to escalate attacks against Israeli forces.[58] Hamas and the PFLP also issued a call for Palestinians and the international community to recognize August 3 as an “international day of mobilization.”[59] Ismail Haniyeh had publicly called for August 3 to be a Global Day of Support for the Gaza Strip in a July 28 televised speech before his death.[60]

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

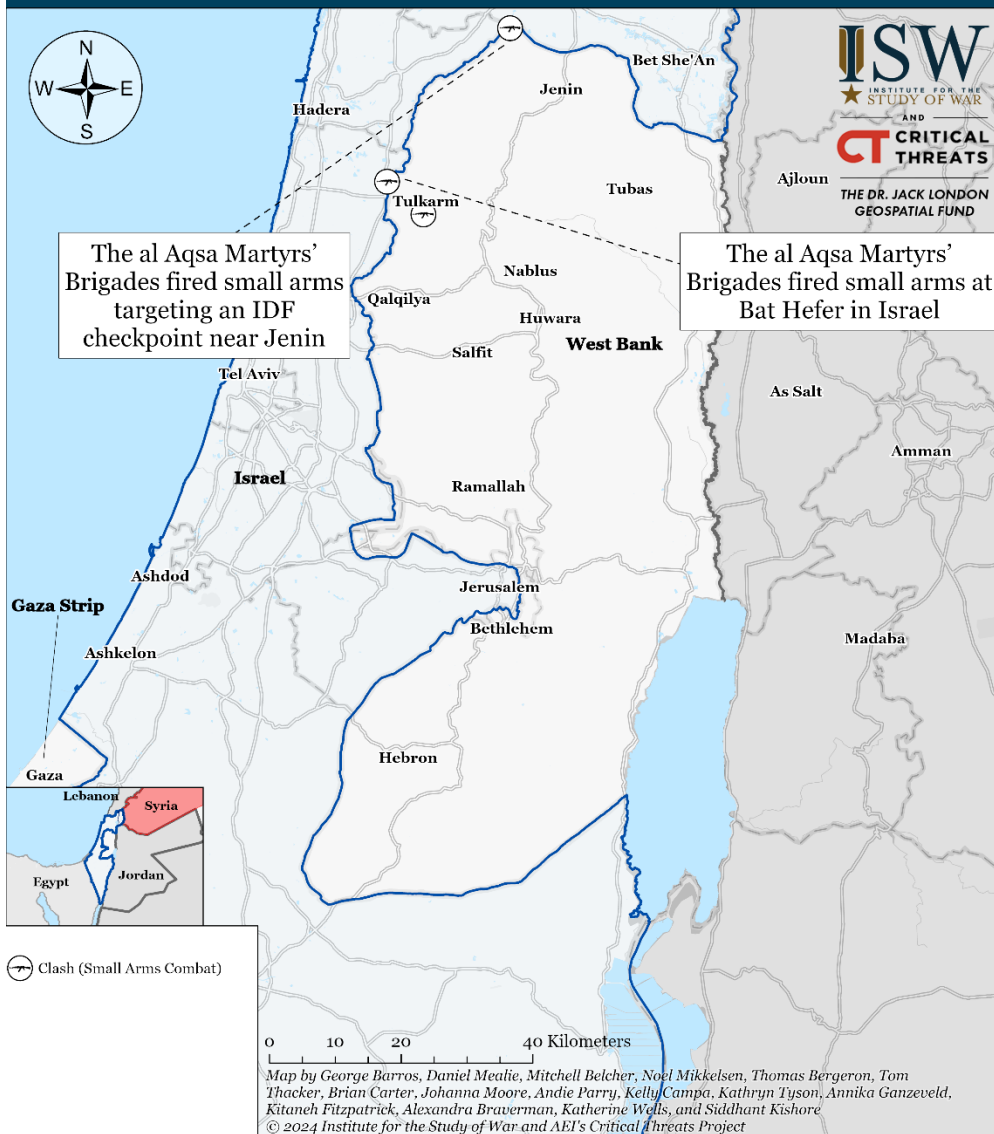
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Palestinian fighters have attacked Israeli forces in at least one location in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on July 31.[61] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades fired small arms targeting an IDF checkpoint near Jenin. The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades separately fired small arms at Bat Hefer—an Israeli town west of Tulkarm.[62]

Israeli forces conducted overnight raids across the West Bank and detained 24 wanted individuals affiliated with Hamas and PIJ.[63] The IDF detained these 24 wanted persons in at least nine locations across the West Bank.[64] The IDF also stated that it has increased “defensive operations” around roads and settlements across the West Bank.[65] These defensive operations come amid the increased Palestinian attacks on civilians in the West Bank, including a shooting and stabbing attack that injured an Israeli civilian in Kiryat Arba settlement in Hebron on July 31.[66]

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of August 1, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah did not claim any attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on July 31.

Lebanese media reported on August 1 that the IDF Air Force struck Kafr Kila and Chamaa in southern Lebanon.[67] Several Lebanese and Syrian citizens were reportedly injured in the attack.[68] These are the first IDF strikes into Lebanon since the IDF killed senior Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut on July 30.

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias condemned the Israeli killings of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and Fuad Shukr in Beirut.[69] Kataib Hezbollah warned that the Axis of Resistance will continue to “inflict blows” on Israel.[70] Ashab al Kahf claimed that Israel and its allies are committing crimes “without a global deterrent to curb them.”

Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi stated on August 1 that the Israeli killings of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and Fuad Shukr in Beirut are part of a “dangerous Israeli and American escalation.”[71] Abdulmalik voiced support for a military response against Israel in response to the Israeli airstrikes against senior Axis of Resistance leaders.[72] Abdulmalik stated that international institutions are ineffective in deterring Israel and that the Axis of Resistance must therefore conduct a strong response to stop Israeli “crimes.”

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei led prayers at a funeral ceremony in Tehran for Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh and his bodyguard on August 1.[73] Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chairman Khalil al Hayya and Haniyeh’s son, Abdel Salam Haniyeh, attended the ceremony.[74] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, and Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, among other Iranian officials, attended the ceremony as well.[75] Haniyeh’s casket was then transferred to Qatar ahead of an official burial on August 2.[76]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian continued to meet with visiting foreign officials in Tehran on July 31. Pezeshkian expressed satisfaction with the newly restored ties between Iran and Sudan and stated his intent to expand cooperation during a meeting with Sudanese Armed Forces-affiliated Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Awad.[77] This meeting follows the reopening of the Iranian and Sudanese embassies after an eight-year hiatus.[78] Pezeshkian also met with the Tanzanian foreign affairs minister, Iraqi Kurdistan regional president, Bolivian foreign affairs minister, Belarusian parliament speaker, Saudi Minister of State, and the Chinese president's special envoy.[79]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed Mohammad Javad Zarif as vice president for strategic affairs and director of the Presidential Center for Strategic Studies on August 1.[80] Zarif served as Iranian foreign affairs minister from 2013 and 2021, during which he played a prominent role in negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Zarif has more recently overseen the transition team for the Pezeshkian administration.[81] This appointment indicates Pezeshkian’s intent to seriously pursue nuclear negotiations with the West. Pezeshkian has nominated Zarif’s close ally, Abbas Araghchi, to be foreign affairs minister for that same reason.[82] The appointment of Zarif is also part of Pezeshkian’s broader effort to populate his senior administration positions with politicians from previous moderate and reformist administrations, such as those of Hassan Rouhani and Mohammad Khatami.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed Mohammed Jafar Ghaem Panah as executive vice president and head of the Presidential Office on August 1.[83] Ghaem Panah is an ophthalmologist and cornea specialist from Iran's University of Medical Sciences. He has experience as the deputy health minister for development and resource management, a Kermanshah City council member, Kermanshah's University of Medical Sciences vice president, and a Tabriz University medical society member. Ghaem Panah also published a letter addressed to the Iranian Ophthalmology Association explaining the negative effects of bullets and paintballs on the eye health of protesters during the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests in Iran.[84]

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

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